

Original Research

“Learn how to keep going”: Applying strengths perspective and hope theory to girls in CrossFit**Christina M. Gipson¹, Nancy L. Malcom¹, Amy Rundio¹, Tamerah Hunt¹**¹ Georgia Southern University, USA

Corresponding author email: cgipson@georgiasouthern.edu

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research relied on in-depth interviews to understand the experiences of at-risk girls who participated in CrossFit. Sports and physical activity-based programs have long been used to address social problems and offer new opportunities for at-risk youth. These programs are often designed keeping the youth in settings with their peers. In this study, four at-risk girls were integrated into traditional CrossFit classes that were more representative of their lived realities, exposing them to participants of different ages, genders, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We combined the strengths perspective and hope theory to examine their experiences. Our findings demonstrated that integrated fitness programs can help at-risk girls achieve successful outcomes. This research also underscored the utility of combining the strengths perspective with hope theory, as we found that hope was an essential element that allowed the girls to realize their inherent strengths and to apply these strengths to other aspects of their lives.

“LEARN HOW TO KEEP GOING”: APPLYING STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE AND HOPE THEORY TO GIRLS IN CROSSFIT

Middle school is hard for Marley, but she has found a place that feels like home. It helps that everyone speaks to her by name when she enters the gym, creating excitement and

enthusiasm. Being one of the youngest people in the gym does not bother Marley, and instead it encourages her to continue coming back.

As the CrossFit trainer explains the workout, Naomi gets excited when she sees that it is full of running, with minimal heavy lifting. Although Naomi will have to work hard in this workout, she knows this will make her stronger for dance team competitions. The other participants in the class tower over the effusive, small frame middle school girl who seems to have endless amounts of energy.

Chloe walks in the gym with her mom and stays close to her throughout the session. As they get boxes out, Chloe quietly asks how hard the workout will be. Half way through, Chloe briefly sees her mom taking a break on the step ups, and she positions herself to keep her mom in her line of sight, the two of them working out side-by-side until they have completed the workout. As they exit the gym together, Chloe asks her mom what she thought about the difficulty of the workout. They continue the conversation all the way home.

Rochelle stands in the middle of the gym, dripping in sweat, looking around at everyone else working out. Sometimes she notes that very few people look like her: brown skin, kinky hair, teenage girl, the same outfit as the last time she was there. Looking at the middle-aged teacher next to her deadlifting the same weight, she imagines what

Keywords: strengths perspective; hope theory; physical activity and sport programs; at-risk middle school girls

responsibilities the teacher has after leaving the gym. This only catches her attention for a few seconds, and she shifts attention back to her barbell to complete the workout.

All four of these girls work out at CrossFit-Strength & Hope (CF-S&H)¹, a CrossFit affiliate gym. Established in 2012, CF-S&H wanted to provide a space for the community to come together through fitness and live a healthy lifestyle. CF-S&H quickly saw positive outcomes with their teenage and adult members and wanted to expand their offerings to children. In 2014, CF-S&H started a CrossFit Kids program for any young person in the community. Generally, CrossFit Kids promoted the aspect that every workout was scalable so it could properly be adjusted for each child and their experience (Bakshi, 2009). Researchers found that children participating in a CrossFit Kids program improved their grades (Bakshi, 2009), fitness levels (Sibley, 2012), and made gains in strength, confidence, and competence (Garst et al., 2020). However, due to the high costs of a CrossFit membership, participation in the CF-S&H children's program was out of reach for some youth. To combat the barrier of expense, CF-S&H took a special interest in contributing to the local community by providing programming for at-risk children. In addition to creating separate programs to target this population, they funded sponsorships for low-income children to engage in regular classes, and they offered summer day camps that featured sliding scale membership fees that were subsidized by sponsors.

The involvement of at-risk youth at CF-S&H evolved over time. For instance, 15 at-risk youth (mostly boys) started coming to CF-S&H when the facility entered a partnership with a local afterschool program called A Place for Kids (APfK)². This partnership made it possible for APfK members to participate in a youth CrossFit program at CF-S&H. According to the APfK administrators, 94 % of their membership came from minority and/or low-income families. Many came from single-parent or caregiver homes and the children enrolled typically had limited options for extracurricular opportunities. Initially, a program was created for girls and boys from APfK where the participants came to the CF-S&H facility and participated in CrossFit classes with their own group. Although these children improved their goal setting techniques and honed in on transferable skills like focusing and resilience, Gipson et al. (2018) found that the children did not fully understand the intent of CrossFit. The scholars suggested that this was due to lack of parental involvement, as the children admitted not talking to their parents about the program. Additionally, the scholars found that although the children were at CF-S&H, they only interacted with the coaches and the group they arrived with, meaning this was no different from being at

the APfK. Gipson et al. (2018) recommended integrating participants in traditional classes with teens and adults, especially when children are in roles in their home lives where they take care of younger siblings or take it upon themselves to make sure they make it to school. Therefore, children from the APfK integrated into traditional CrossFit classes their second year as it was thought that the setting was representative of the girls' lived realities. CF-S&H also sponsored a summer day camp open to all children, not just those identified as at-risk.

PURPOSE

In this study we were interested in examining the experiences of at-risk youth with CrossFit when in settings that were more similar to those of their daily lives, e.g., with adults and teenagers, teachers and nurses, college students, affluent middle schoolers, retirees. Although a large body of research has been conducted on interventions designed specifically to cater toward at-risk youth, little attention has been given to programs that integrate at-risk youth into real world settings to support social development. Our study began by examining how the girls' experiences in CrossFit at CF-S&H impacted their lives. During our discussions with the girls and their mothers, we came to realize that strengths perspective and hope theory could be combined to form a useful lens for investigating youth sport for development. In this paper we apply this new lens, which represents a combination of strengths perspective and hope theory, to the experiences of at-risk girls who participate in the integrated, real world setting of CrossFit.

As research focusing on at-risk youth from the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework often utilizes interventions, it is useful to begin with a general overview of scholarship on youth intervention programs. This overview begins by highlighting the transition from using deficit perspectives in early programs toward the more contemporary emphasis on the strengths-based perspective and the PYD framework. Next we focus specifically on sport-based youth intervention programs, observing that most intervention programs isolate at-risk youth rather than integrating them into the larger community. In contrast, we point out how CrossFit offers an integrated sport setting which is well-suited as a space for at-risk youth to develop and use their own strengths. After discussing our interview methodology and data analysis, we outline and review the separate theoretical approaches of the strengths perspective and hope theory. Finally, we propose that these two approaches be combined, and we apply this new "strength and hope" lens to the lived experiences of the girls who participated in our interviews.

Youth Interventions: From Deficits to Strengths

Historically, interventions focused on identifying and addressing the negative situations and problems of youth such as “learning disabilities; affective disorders; antisocial conduct; low motivation and achievement; drinking, drug use, or smoking; psychosocial crisis triggered by maturational episodes such as puberty; and risks of neglect, abuse, and economic deprivation that plague certain populations” (Damon, 2004, p. 14). Therefore, initial interventions were developed from a problem-centered or deficit perspective (Damon, 2004) which was adapted from a mental-health model (Redl & Wineman, 1951) and the criminal-justice model that has stressed punishment over prevention (Damon, 2004). Intervention programs treated participants as potential problems for society who needed to be fixed before they became actual problems in society.

More recently, scholars have shifted away from the deficit perspective to embrace strengths-based perspectives, such as the PYD framework, which encourage practitioners to envision young people as resources for society (Damon, 2004; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Central to the PYD framework is the assertion that every individual possesses natural and inherent capabilities, and that intervention programs succeed by helping individuals to actualize these latent strengths and skills (Benson, 2003; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Shek et al., 2019; Tolan, 2014). Numerous studies have used the PYD approach on diverse youth and found its positive impact on a variety of aspects of life, including mental health, academic well-being, self-esteem, social confidence, and healthy behaviors (Curran & Wexler, 2017; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2018; MacDonald et al., 2020; Milot Travers & Mahalik, 2019; Newland et al., 2019; Shek & Chai, 2020; Whipple et al., 2020).

Sport-Based Interventions for At-Risk Youth

When working with at-risk youth, there are a variety of sport-based and physical activity intervention programs that have been established to achieve positive outcomes for youth (Petitpas et al., 2005). These interventions programs have found success with reducing the risk of obesity (Martin et al., 2013); lowering the risk of engaging in delinquent behavior (Miller et al., 2007); addressing mental health issues like depression and anxiety (Stubbs & Rosenbaum, 2018); and increasing social engagement, social inclusion and citizenship (Parker et al., 2019). Further, despite girls and boys being affected by similar social risk factors, there is evidence to suggest that sport for development programs are more often created with boys in mind, resulting in an underrepresentation of girls in these programs (Bruening et al., 2015; Collison et al., 2017;

Farello et al., 2019). To address this underrepresentation, researchers using the PYD framework have tailored programs for girls, by focusing on various components of relationships between participants, mentors and mothers (Bruening et al., 2009, 2015), training coaches to use self-determination theory in their coaching practices and curriculum lessons (Walters et al., 2020), forming leadership panels with girls as leaders and using a Youth Participatory Action Research curriculum (Chard et al., 2020), and providing space for girls-only (Johnston et al., 2019) to provide a better understanding of girls' experiences and long-term development in the area.

What is interesting about these sport-based intervention programs is that because they are specifically designed to serve at-risk youth, the programs are structured in such a way that they segregate and isolate these youth. Most interventions, whether or not they are based on sports, create spaces and opportunities for the empowerment of participants. The sport-based interventions discussed above all targeted a specific group of at-risk youth and had positive outcomes for the participants (Bruening et al., 2015; Johnston et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2007; Parker et al., 2019). Notably, a large body of research on youth behavior links peer pressure with negative behaviors, and highlights how risky behavior can be reduced when the youth are exposed to a wider array of people outside of their peer groups (Crockett et al., 2006; Prinstein et al., 2001; Simons-Morton et al., 2001; Sullivan, 2006; Sullivan & Larson, 2010; Werch et al., 2003). Therefore, some programs align with local community organizations and develop youth-adult partnerships to expose participants to positive relationships (Bruening et al., 2015; MacDonald et al., 2020; Sullivan & Larson, 2010). Such programs are innovative in the way that they promote relationships between youth and others in their wider community. It is these relationships which are shown to enhance youth development and community engagement, such that youth and adults learn from one another, the youth attain an increased sense of belonging. Broader research on youth development points to positive outcomes when youth are integrated into their communities (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Sullivan & Larson, 2010; Zeldin et al., 2003, 2013). Many programs for at-risk youth report successful outcomes, yet these interventions rarely offer youth the opportunity to interact with people of various races, genders, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Gipson et al., 2018). Therefore, studying at-risk youth within traditional sport or fitness programming which facilitates positive youth development may provide a unique and different perspective on the participants' experiences.

CrossFit as a Setting for the Integration for At-Risk Youth

CrossFit is a branded fitness regime that started in 2001. Rooted in being “broad, general, and inclusive” (Glassman, 2007, p. 4), the CrossFit model uses high-intensity functional training to develop participants in three different training modalities: gymnastics, weightlifting, and metabolic conditioning. Regular CrossFit classes cater to athletes of all ages, genders, and abilities by enabling athletes to choose their weights and modify movements, which in turn encourages participants to alter the prescribed workouts to their skill-level (Eather et al., 2016; Sibley, 2012). Despite research highlighting latent misogyny within the CrossFit culture (Dawson, 2015; Knapp, 2015; Nash, 2018; Schrijnder et al., 2020; Washington & Economides, 2016), CrossFit is well-suited for the development for at-risk girls for a variety of reasons. For example, the ability to modify workouts is empowering as it offers participants greater autonomy and makes the activity accessible for all (Schrijnder et al., 2020). In addition, the ever-changing variety of workouts serves to improve participant engagement and enjoyment (Eather et al., 2016), while the emphasis on celebrating individual progress promotes goal-setting (Gipson et al., 2018), and also engenders a strong sense of community that in turn fulfills social needs of participants (Davies et al., 2014).

METHODS

In this qualitative study we used convenience sampling to conduct in-depth interviews with at-risk girls who participate in CrossFit to understand these girls’ experiences in an integrated sport setting. All our interview participants were introduced to the activity of CrossFit through CF-S&H.

Interviews

Although most youth participants at CF-S&H were male, we were especially interested in learning about the experiences of the at-risk girls who have participated in these sport development programs. We invited the five girls and their mothers participating in CF-S&H youth programming to participate in interviews. Of the five, we conducted in-depth interviews with four girls and their mothers. Each of these girls can be classified as at-risk youth based on household structure and family income. These four girls took different paths to join CrossFit. Two of the girls (both African American) were first involved through their afterschool program, APfK, from August 2015 until May 2016. The other two girls (both white) first started through the week-long summer camp held at CF-S&H in 2016. After their initial involvement, some of the girls pursued additional

opportunities in CrossFit, such as by joining regular adult classes. All four of the girls were raised in single-parent homes where the mother was head of the household. Background information for each of the interviewees is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant demographics

Name	Age	Race	CrossFit Experience	Family Structure	Mom’s Education	Mom’s CrossFit Participation
Marley	10	white	CF Kids summer camp adult classes	divorced/single income <\$10,000 3 people in household	MS	yes
Chloe	13	white	CF Kids summer camp adult classes	divorced/single income \$40,000-49,999 3 people in household	BS	yes
Naomi	12	black	APfK adult classes	divorced/single income <\$10,000 2 people in household	AA	no
Rochelle	13	black	APfK summer camp adult classes	single income \$20,000-29,999 5 people in household	HS diploma	no

The interviews were conducted in December 2016 and lasted between one and two hours and were conducted in public meeting spaces. There were always two interviewers present, with one person taking the lead on asking questions and the other, who was also a CrossFit coach familiar to both the girls and their mothers, asking follow-up questions and helping to clarify when the participant might not have understood a question. None of the other interviewers were CrossFit participants, which allowed them to ask for more basic explanations of the participants’ CrossFit experiences, and they did not have any previous connections to the research participants. Both the girls and their mothers were made aware of the interview procedure and the purpose of the interviews and they gave written consent to participate in the research. During the first part of each interview, both the girl and her mother were present, and the interview was conducted as if it were a conversation among the four people who had gathered (the girl, her mother, and the two interviewers). Toward the end of each interview the girl was dismissed, and the discussion continued with her mother.

Coding and Data Analysis

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and each member of the research team was able to read the interview transcripts independently before we met to discuss our general impressions. During these early meetings, we realized that the girls’ experiences seemed to contain elements of both the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 1996) and hope theory (Snyder, 2002). Although we had set out with a general goal to learn about the experiences of at-risk girls in CrossFit, we soon came to the realization that there might be utility in combining the strengths perspective and hope theory to better understand the girls’ experiences in this sport for development program. Using a priori coding (Saldaña, 2009), we identified key themes of the strengths

perspective and hope theory and then developed codes to represent these themes (see Table 2). After identifying our list of codes, we met as a group to apply the codes to the interview transcripts. In these meetings, each team member had their own copy of the transcript to read and mark. Each team member would read a page of the transcript and independently identify the appropriate codes for the data on that page. We would then take turns discussing how we had coded that page, explaining why particular codes were selected, and having more in-depth discussions when there was disagreement or uncertainty as to whether a code should be used. This collaborative process allowed us to make final decisions about how to code each transcript.

Table 2. List of codes

Code	Definition
EVENT	denotes important events that represent significant moments in the girl's life
MEMBERSHIP	indicates that the girl expressed a sense of belonging to a group (family, CrossFit gym, dance troupe, sports team, etc.)
HOPE-INDUCING	quality relationships that help the girls develop agency and pathways toward goals
RESILIENCE	persevering in difficult circumstances; overcoming challenges; exposure to adversity
EMPOWERMENT	exhibits a combination of being aware of limits and also recognizing that it is possible to overcome limits
CONFIDENCE	increased self-assurance and positive self-esteem
SELF-DETERMINATION	taking action on one's own behalf; charting one's own course

Strengths Perspective

The strengths-based approach has been utilized within social work practice and research for several decades. Rather than focusing on the weaknesses of the individual, family, or community, the strengths perspective examines the strengths, knowledge, capabilities and resources of all (Saleebey, 1996). Each person is treated as unique, and they are recognized as experts when it comes to understanding their life experiences (Saleebey, 1996).

Clinicians who employ the strengths perspective use words like membership, empowerment, and resilience to help individuals recognize their own resources. Membership refers to being a responsible and valued member of a group (Saleebey, 1996). Social workers practice empowerment when helping others overcome the constraints that limit them through increasing their awareness of these pressures (Ackerson & Harrison, 2000; Pinderhughes, 1994). People who are resilient deal with these tensions and conflicts and develop skills, abilities, knowledge, and insight (Saleebey, 1996). Resilience can lead to confidence and improved self-esteem (Heyne & Anderson, 2012).

Importantly, this perspective does not ask people to deny their difficulties, but to recognize that their strengths were built because of the challenges they experienced. Through the work done between social workers and their clients, people are not discounted because of their label but are asked to recognize and utilize the qualities, skills, and resources of the client to meet their needs and address their challenges (Saleebey, 1996). For the purposes of this study, when clients recognize that they can use their strengths to make choices in their lives and move toward their chosen goals, they have self-determination (Ackerson & Harrison, 2000; Dattilo et al., 1998; Heyne & Anderson, 2012).

Hope Theory

By using resources to address their challenges, individuals display hope, "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 287). Agency is built through a sense of successful goal attainment previously, currently, and in the future, while pathways refer to the ability to create successful plans to reach those goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Agency and pathways are not the same, as one may have goal-directed energy but may not perceive the pathways to goal achievement, or one may see their pathways without feeling that they can attain those goals. In both cases, an individual would not have hope because hope requires that both agency and pathways are present. Additionally, hope does not guarantee successful goal attainment, but it increases the likelihood that an individual's goals can be achieved.

Hope is "subjectively defined as people assess their agency and pathways related to goals," and, for each person hope is "consistent across situations and times" so that an individual who has hope in one situation is more likely to also display hope in another situation (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 571). In addition, hope is "fundamentally social in nature," requiring both sharing and participation to look toward a collective future (Paraschak, 2013, p. 237). To this end, "seeing oneself as part of a larger social fabric of responsibility provides the impetus for people to consider how the exercise of their individual agency affects the world and the people in it" (Jacobs, 2005, p. 788). Group membership is important to both the strengths perspective and hope theory. Hope is cultivated when individuals and the groups to which they belong overcome challenges and recognize their own strengths. These relationships with others are hope-inducing because they allow individuals to sense both their agency and pathways toward their goals.

Combining Strengths Perspective & Hope Theory

Based on previous research conducted by Saleebey (1996) and Paraschak (2013), we propose that combining both strengths perspective and hope theory can show that upon an instigating event, such as joining an organization, individuals become members and sometimes foster hope-inducing relationships (HIR). These relationships help them to develop agency and pathways toward goals, which ultimately leads to empowerment (Paraschak, 2013). In addition to HIR, membership can lead directly to empowerment (Paraschak, 2013; Saleebey, 1996), which can lead to either resilience or self-determination (Saleebey, 1996; Snyder et al., 1991). Resilience can then lead to confidence or self-determination (Heyne & Anderson, 2012), while confidence is also a pathway to self-determination (Snyder et al., 1991).

FINDINGS

The interviews with these four girls and their mothers provided valuable insight to their life experiences and prodded us to think more deeply about the utility of combining the strengths perspective and hope theory for understanding the benefits of girls' involvement in physical activity programs. The data shows that instigating events and hope-inducing relationships can lead to empowerment, resilience, and confidence, which ultimately can be pathways to self-determination. Understandably, the participants in our interviews displayed different levels of confidence, empowerment, and self-determination. Even though Marley demonstrated self-determination through self-advocacy, her story was primarily one of belonging and the role that hope-inducing relationships played in her life. Chloe told a story that focused on resilience. Naomi provided a story of confidence in which developing strength and skills allowed her to take a leadership role on her competitive dance team. Rochelle conveyed a story of responsibility and self-determination in which she chose to look outward in order to help others. The following sections examine these themes in more detail.

Instigating Events

Each of the participants identified several instigating events that were impactful in their lives and personal development. For example, Marley was first introduced to CrossFit through her mom, who started taking adult classes several years prior. Marley reported that when she was younger, she enjoyed watching her mom's workout and began to wonder, "can I do that?" She said, "It looked fun...and I liked watching [mom] lift, and I liked watching a whole bunch of other people lift. It was cool." Marley would

occasionally participate in a few exercises during her mom's workout session, which led Marley to join the CF Kids program and the summer camp before eventually joining the adult classes. Even though she is the youngest participant in this study, her mom reports that "everybody said it was time for Marley to start the big classes." Marley recounted the time when she was urged to join the adults, saying "I was excited and was like YES!" She explained how this would allow her to work out more often and be challenged more.

Switching from the CrossFit Kids program to the adult classes was also an instigating event for Chloe, who told us that at first she was intimidated, but that after about a week she became more comfortable because, "I realized I could do it the same as the other people." As with Marley and Chloe, Naomi reported that she enjoyed the adult classes more than the youth-focused afterschool program because the classes moved faster, but also the weights seemed harder. For these three girls, the adult classes were an event that provided a new challenge and led to growth.

Many of the important events in Naomi's life revolved around her dance team, but as she described her experience with dance competition, Naomi and her mother both credited Naomi's involvement in CrossFit with making her a stronger dancer. Likewise, Rochelle attributed her improved physical condition in her physical education classes to her involvement in CrossFit Kids, and it was evident that these CrossFit events were significant in large part because she had performed well in front of her peers, helping to bolster her confidence and pave the way for self-determination.

When we apply the strengths perspective and hope theory to these four girls' experiences, we see that instigating events become touchstones for the girls. These memorable events represent experiences that were often linked to personal growth.

Hope Inducing Relationships

Feeling like you are a part of something is important for all people, and this is especially true for middle school girls. Membership was defined, in this study, as feeling a sense of belonging to a group. Each of these girls took part in the interviews because of their membership with CF-S&H.

In addition, the girls identified other important memberships that shaped their lives. Naomi, for example, explained that she liked to stay active and often asked her mom to allow her to join activities and groups. She appeared to be proud of her long list of memberships and shared her experiences with these different groups, often

discussing how she balanced her multiple memberships. Though CrossFit played an important role in Naomi's life, even more central was her membership with the dance team. Marley described her role as a member of her family, a cheer squad, and a soccer team in addition to CF-S&H. Marley's mom explained that the CrossFit membership was important because Marley was around strong women of all ages and she "feels like one of the [CrossFit] girls" as they text about their own weights and the workouts. Rochelle's mom encouraged her to get involved with school groups and afterschool program activities. Rochelle's involvement in various groups allowed her family to be integrated into the community which provided them with additional resources to manage life in a single parent household with four young children.

Group membership is especially important because of its potential to provide individuals with hope-inducing relationships. Hope-inducing relationships were defined as quality relationships that helped the girls develop agency and pathways toward goals. Although being a member of a group does not guarantee the development of hope-inducing relationships, our interviews revealed that each girl did have hope-inducing relationships upon which they could rely.

For the four girls in our study, family relationships, and more specifically the relationships the girls each had with their mothers, were hope-inducing. For example, Marley's mother explained that she initially brought Marley along with her to her own adult CrossFit workouts because she had nowhere else for Marley to go, but after realizing how intrigued Marley was with the activity, she encouraged Marley to participate. Because of her own close relationship with her daughter, Marley's mother admitted that she had to learn to give Marley space at the gym and set boundaries on herself so that the coaches, rather than the parent, could inform Marley on technique. In this way, we see not only that Marley's relationship with her mother was itself hope-inducing because it allowed Marley to develop her own agency, but that her mother was key to helping Marley develop additional hope-inducing relationships with other adults at CF-S&H. This was a pattern that was repeated with the other girls.

Not only did Marley have a strong relationship with her mother, but she developed important relationships with other women in the CrossFit box. Marley admitted that participating in adult CrossFit can be hard, but she learned that she can rely on other people to help her rise to the challenge and gave her a pathway to her goals. As Marley explained, "Sometimes I've been like, 'I can't do the WOD (workout of the day), it looks horrible' ... but now I really don't care. I know somebody will help me. I can do it

now." In fact, Marley explained that one of the reasons she prefers the adult workouts to the CrossFit Kids program is because "everyone is there to help each other and to make each other stronger... Everyone is worried about themselves in CrossFit Kids. In regular CrossFit, they don't care about themselves, they want to cheer each other on." Marley's relationships with adult women in the gym helped her gain a healthier perspective. CF-S&H hosts women's only workouts that include time for conversations and discussions after the physical exercises are completed. Marley's mother described a time when Marley attended one of these sessions and realized that even some of the adult women whom Marley admired struggle with body image issues. "For Marley, it was like, 'you struggle too?' ... That opened a huge door to talk about the struggle, which is a blessing... I am thankful that she feels safe enough to talk to me about it."

Naomi's mother was especially resourceful in seeking out opportunities for her daughter and supporting her participation in these opportunities. Naomi explained, "I just like to stay active and stuff. It's not hard to do anything cause I'm always asking my mom to put me in something." Naomi's mother shared this enthusiasm and would go out of her way to enroll Naomi in extracurricular activities, often finding ways to overcome obstacles for Naomi's benefit. Given their household's low-income status, Naomi's mother opted to serve as a volunteer dance team coach in order to have Naomi's participation fee waived, demonstrating her commitment to helping Naomi maintain group memberships and develop hope-inducing relationships with those around her. Naomi used these opportunities to foster hope-inducing relationships with adult members of the gym when she moved from CrossFit Kids to the adult workouts at CF-S&H. When talking about this transition, Naomi explained that she preferred the adult group because "it's like more support when you're trying to get stuff done, seeing what they can do and stuff." Not only did Naomi appreciate the support that other CrossFitters provided to her as she is working out, she also recognized the benefit of being challenged by working alongside adults who might be stronger and faster.

Like the other participants, Chloe had a close relationship with her mom. Yet, being able to CrossFit with her mom added another layer to their relationship as they experienced workouts together and had to discover how to interact while at the gym. Chloe's mom began to see herself in her daughter (e.g., the doubt, the intimidation, and the anxiety). But through this space, the two were able to have conversations, and Chloe's mom was able to tell her how proud she was of her. Chloe's relationship with her mother was hope-inducing, but she did not develop hope-inducing

relationships with other CrossFit members. Chloe's comments suggest that she did not really feel a strong sense of belonging in CrossFit. When asked about her experience moving from CrossFit Kids to the adult classes, Chloe told us that it was "intimidating because they've been there for a while and they're stronger and bigger." Though Chloe said she no longer feels intimidated by the adults, she explained that she would feel "better if there were more people my age." One of the characteristics of CF-S&H is that fellow CrossFitters will cheer for each other as they finish a workout, but Chloe found this frustrating and did not like it when she thought that others were watching her during the workout. Hope-inducing relationships play an important role in developing resilience, empowerment, confidence, and self-determination because they provide an opportunity for the girls to develop their own agency and pathways to achieving their goals.

Empowerment

The interviews demonstrated that group membership and the hope-inducing relationships with their mothers and with adult members of CF-S&H fostered empowerment. In our interviews, we learned about situations where the girls were aware of limitations and constraints but were also empowered to identify ways of overcoming the obstacles. Chloe's experiences within the adult classes were empowering as she realized that she could do the same workout, weights, and repetitions as the adult members. When asked to talk about the positive aspects of CrossFit, Chloe mentioned:

You get to see what your strengths are and try to improve yourself and be healthier and learn how to do workouts safely. And you learn how to keep going, you learn mental strength because it takes a lot of mental strength... At the beginning I thought it would be easier to just quit but now I don't want to quit, I want to keep going.

Marley experienced empowerment through conquering the physical workouts, but also through the insights she gained through relationships with adult women, as previously described. Marley and her mom also talked about Marley's internal dialogue when the workout gets hard, and Marley wants to quit. Her internal dialogue could have been a limitation, but this awareness allowed Marley to recognize what she is saying to herself and, further, allowed Marley and her mom to discuss how she can control her internal dialogue. Her mom aimed to curb the negative dialogue to something more positive and productive which can be practiced in the CrossFit setting and carried over into other aspects of her life. The ability to identify one's limits and realizing pathways to overcome these limits resulted mostly

from the hope-inducing relationships each girl had, as well as membership in other groups. Importantly, this sense of empowerment could be seen by both the girls and their mothers in other areas of their lives.

Resilience

The empowerment found through their membership and hope-inducing relationships also contributed to the girls' resilience, or ability to persevere, when facing adversity and challenges. As an example, Chloe and her mom discussed their shared experience with CrossFit. Chloe's mom explained, "It was hard for me when she started regular classes because I saw a lot of myself in her, she modeled a lot of my behavior when I first started, I was so intimidated." Chloe recalled that during her first week, when she would get discouraged, her mom would yell at her to keep going. Her mom added:

I was telling her the main thing ... to focus on was to finish, just to finish the workout, you know, like you can do it, it's gonna be hard, it's okay if you need to take a break, but just finish.

At another point in the interview, Chloe demonstrated that she had learned this lesson as she told us that CrossFit was "hard." When asked what was hard about it, Chloe then explained, "It was hard to keep going because you want to just quit in the middle but you have to keep going." When posed with another question of whether she ever gave in to the temptation to stop when the workout was difficult, Chloe stated, "I just stood there and rested for a second and took some water and then kept going," adding that the reason she did not quit was because, "I wanted to finish." Chloe explained that through CrossFit, she has gotten more mentally stronger than physically. Chloe's mother agreed as she described a time when Chloe was behind in a tennis game and aggressively came back from behind. She normally had a defeated attitude but dealt with the situation a lot better than she would have pre-CrossFit.

Chloe was not the only girl to demonstrate the link between hope-inducing relationships and resilience. After explaining that she would find out the workouts before attending CrossFit, we asked Marley if she ever chose to skip workouts when she knew they would be hard, and Marley responded that she did not skip because she liked the challenge of finishing and the feeling of getting stronger. Later, Marley talked about not quitting in the middle of workouts because once she started the workout, she knew what it felt like and she knew that eventually it would get more comfortable. She even explained that she liked to prove to herself that she could be successful, which she

described situations both in the box and in school. Marley's mom observed that before finding success in CrossFit, Marley would have screaming meltdowns where she would throw pens because of her frustration with math. Since starting CrossFit and overcoming hard workouts, Marley no longer complained about homework and asked for help when she needed it.

Rochelle also discussed developing her resilience throughout the interview. She explained that after beginning CrossFit she was sore and complained a lot to her mom and grandmother. But then Rochelle compared her CrossFit experience to running track where the first lap was hard, but when she realized she could finish she would do a second and third and each lap got easier. Ultimately, it was largely Rochelle's decision to continue with CrossFit and demonstrated her resilience and self-determination. Rochelle told us, "I like pushing myself to get that goal, to not give up and do the best I can," and she shared that "since this is my first [year of] CrossFit, now I know the process, so next year I might do more difficult things that I never did before."

Resilience was central to Naomi's story. During the interview, Naomi talked about how hard it is to go straight from CrossFit to dance class, saying "it's hard but you keep doing it." Naomi often mentioned being "tired," yet this was something in which she seemed to take pride. She offered fatigue and pain as evidence that she had put in the work needed to improve her performance. Naomi's mother told us that Naomi "complains, but she loves every minute of it," and at one point Naomi used a bragging tone as she stated, "everything hurts." Naomi's mother encouraged this resilience, reacting positively when Naomi persisted in her efforts. Naomi's mother also modeled resilience in the way that she overcame financial obstacles to open doors for Naomi, both through the competitive dance team and membership at APfK.

Confidence

Notably, our interviews demonstrated that the development of resilience and hope-inducing relationships positively affects confidence, which we defined as increased self-assurance and positive self-esteem. For instance, Rochelle was confident enough in her own abilities to help others. Instead of boasting about being better at a movement or exercise, she chose to help her peers so they too could be successful. Rochelle explained, "If I feel like I'm stronger than someone, like if they can't make it or something, I feel like I can help them." This was similar to how she described working on math problems collaboratively as a member of the math team and helping others around her

complete their work.

Further, even though Naomi claimed membership in numerous groups, she identified herself as a dancer and showed the most confidence in her dance abilities. Naomi's confidence was exhibited through her willingness to try new things—both with "showing out" on the dance floor and in her willingness to try new activities such as golf, archery, CrossFit, cheerleading, basketball, and taekwondo. Her confidence and self-determination were also on display when Naomi took on leadership roles, stepping in to help others, such as by showing her dance teammates different exercises that would help them improve flexibility and strength. There were times when Naomi was not willing to be out-shone, even by adults. Naomi and her mother recalled a time when Naomi's uncle visited the family and he was trying to impress Naomi, but instead he ended up being the one who was impressed. After showing Naomi how many push-ups he could perform, Naomi told him, "I do CrossFit" and then, as mom explained, "she started doing her pushups too and she was doing them right, and he was like, 'Wow! ... Look at my niece!'" Toward the end of our interview, after Naomi left the discussion, the interviewer's first comment to Naomi's mom was, "Honestly – has she always been this confident?" Mom then explained, "CrossFit has really helped her a lot with dancing. I know she's confident. As far as exercising and showing people, she wouldn't have done that before. [Now] she'll be like, 'this is how you're supposed to do it.'" Additionally, Naomi was often picked to be the last one on the line when performing, which meant she got to do extra things for the judges and spectators, serving in many ways as an anchor for the team. Naomi's confidence also enabled her to speak up for herself and the team by recommending routines to the coach, and she demonstrated leadership by showing her teammates stretches and moves.

Self-determination

Finally, empowerment, resilience, and confidence all impact self-determination. Self-determination is an important outcome of the strengths perspective and hope theory, and our research team spent considerable time discussing how to apply this outcome to youth participants. Typically, self-determination indicates that an individual is able to make choices for herself and has a high degree of control over her life. Full self-determination is not something we would expect of middle school youth, as their parents, teachers, and coaches rightfully guide the majority of these students' lives. Despite this, we see evidence that even at their young ages, these girls demonstrated burgeoning self-determination.

The resilience and empowerment Marley gained as a result of her hope-inducing relationships with her mom and members of CF-S&H paved the way for self-determination. Marley's mother explained that Marley has a history of anxiety and anger that stem from a troubled relationship with her father. Her mother related that CrossFit "has helped so much for her to feel physically stronger, emotionally stronger, and be able to say things and stand up for things that children should not have to." Her mom explained that over time Marley's anxiety grew "to the point that worrying about if she was away from me she would die." However, Marley had recently been able to exercise self-determination by deciding to set the terms of visitation with her father. Marley has started to act as her own advocate. On one occasion Marley feared that her father had arrived at school to retrieve her, even though Marley had chosen not to be with him. Marley went to her teacher for help, saying, "I think my dad is here and I am not going with him and this is why" (as related by Marley's mother). Her mother directly attributed this self-advocacy to "not just CrossFit but being around the environment and the empowering impact that has. [It has] translated into every aspect of her life."

During our interview with Chloe, when we asked about her goals and hopes, Chloe talked about long term career goals, and she made a link between what she was doing in school and how her academic studies linked to her desired career. In this way, Chloe's focus on school and education demonstrated her growing self-determination as she was taking the first steps to chart her course in life. Importantly, Chloe's mother explained that Chloe has learned to apply lessons of resilience learned in the CrossFit gym to other parts of her life, such as in school, on the tennis court, and when playing basketball. Chloe's mother told us,

I definitely see it in school ... before, with math or anything, if she didn't understand it right away it was meltdown city, it was always 'I can't do this, I can't do this.' And that's one thing I've noticed is that she has learned to calm herself down and be like, 'let me take a break from this and come back to it.'

Her ability to take action on her own behalf and apply her resilience to other areas of life demonstrates self-determination.

Of the four girls we interviewed, Rochelle showed the highest level of self-determination. Likely because of her family structure, Rochelle carried more responsibility than the other participants. Being the oldest of four children in a single-parent home often meant that Rochelle had to take responsibility for herself, and it also gave her the

opportunity to make decisions that would impact her family. Being an older sibling, she was patient and able to communicate with others to help them be better, as demonstrated when she would help the other children at the APFK afterschool program. During our interview, Rochelle and her mother also shared that even though Rochelle often helped the household by caring for her younger siblings, she would occasionally exert her independence by going to her grandmother's house when she decided that she needed space. In school, Rochelle was a member of the international club and the math team. Even though her mother stated that she encouraged Rochelle to be involved in a variety of activities, it seemed clear that Rochelle was the one who has chosen to join these school clubs. Rochelle told us that she was invited to join the international club based on "leadership, achievement, and helping people." Rochelle's enthusiasm for helping others is on display at CrossFit, also. Rochelle tells us, "If I feel like I'm stronger than someone, like if they can't make it or something, I feel like I can help them." In this quote, we see Rochelle's true strengths – helping others, demonstrating responsibility and leadership as she worked to empower those around her.

DISCUSSION

This study did not develop another intervention for females identified as at-risk, but instead utilized a CrossFit program that integrated the girls into classes with a diverse array of people. Even as interventions specifically for at-risk females have shown increases in self-esteem, confidence, empowerment and self-determination (Biddle et al., 2005; Bruening et al., 2009; DeBate & Thompson, 2005; Landry & Solmon, 2004; Schmalz et al., 2007; Seal & Sherry, 2018), these traditional intervention programs tend to gather at-risk youth together in a way that insulates them from the wider community. However, there is reason to believe that programs which integrate at-risk youth into the larger community would have added benefits (Gipson et al., 2018). Many non-sport intervention programs have found success by fostering relationships between at-risk youth and community mentors from different backgrounds (Johnston et al., 2019; MacDonald et al. 2020), and yet sport-based intervention programs have not used this model, perhaps because the sport setting tends to separate participants by age and gender in order to foster equitable experiences with the sport. However, CrossFit offers a sport setting where people of widely varying ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds can compete side by side (Gipson et al., 2021). As both DeMartini and Belasik (2020) and Maslic (2019) highlighted, the structure of CrossFit also aligns with other sport for development goals, as it offers high growth, adaptability, and spaces and opportunities to create a sense of belonging. Our research findings revealed that the

integration of our participants into a CrossFit setting obtained results consistent with interventional research for at-risk girls, as our participants were shown to develop hope-inducing relationships that led to empowerment, resilience, confidence, and self-determination.

As sport and physical activity interventions are often created with males in mind, researchers have focused on increasing females' self-esteem and confidence and empowerment (Bruening et al., 2009; Chard, et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2007; Staiano et al., 2013; Walters et al., 2020), as research has shown females tend to have lower levels than boys. The girls in this study displayed these increased characteristics as they described the importance of transitioning from a youth-focused level of CrossFit, i.e., CrossFit Kids and the APfK program, to the adult classes. As three of the girls recalled this as a significant event, two girls highlighted that people outside of the CrossFit setting taking notice of their strength and ability was memorable.

All four girls shared experiences of empowerment and hope-inducing relationships with their mothers, college students, and other women in the gym. The narratives that were shared echoed the work of Johnston et al. (2019) who found the ability for at-risk girls to develop social relationships with their coaches in a girls-only setting. Additionally, the girls found value in including their mothers in the discussion, and in some cases, in the CrossFit setting as this created a stronger bond similar to the one Bruening et al. (2015) highlighted when including mentors and mothers. Similar relationships from interventions are created in a CrossFit space as the gym norms are to create a supportive community of a diverse group of people (Maslic, 2019).

The girls explained situations where they used resilience and started to develop self-determination in the CrossFit space. The girls shared experiences where they did not think they could complete a workout or thought it would be too hard before even starting. However, the way CrossFit is typically practiced, athletes can modify the workout to each person's ability (Maslic, 2019). Additionally, the community within the CrossFit gym encourages athletes to complete the workout and cheer and support each athlete in their goals (Gipson et al., 2021). The girls shared experiences where they were resilient in workouts and in some cases, the girls explained they adapted a resilient mindset to other areas of their lives, as they were able to describe how they learned to approach challenges by breaking down the big things into manageable tasks. This novel approach to integrating at-risk girls in CrossFit programming created an opportunity for the girls to develop relationships, build hope, and realize strengths.

Paraschak (2013) argued that adopting a strengths perspective that incorporates practices of hope had many benefits for researching Aboriginal physical activity practices. Our work builds on this argument by demonstrating that membership in a group alone is not enough to identify and leverage strengths, and by showing that hope built through relationships is carried beyond those relationships to other areas of life (not just the physical activity).

First, simply being a member of a group did not necessarily lead to feelings of agency and a sense of pathways to reach desired goals; instead, hope was needed. Saleebey (1996) identifies membership as an element of the strengths perspective. However, our findings suggest that membership by itself is not enough to realize one's strengths and that hope is a key part of realizing and leveraging these strengths. For example, Chloe did not feel a strong sense of belonging in CrossFit, and instead her resilience was realized through her hope-inducing relationship with her mother. Additionally, Paraschak (2013) argues that hope is social in nature, and our work supports this argument. The girls in the study recognized that they faced challenges, but had hope that they could reach their goals because of the empowerment, resilience, and confidence they built through their hope-inducing relationships. By identifying empowerment, resilience, confidence, and self-determination in the girls' experiences, we were able to add to Paraschak's work by connecting hope to these elements of the strengths perspective.

Furthermore, although Paraschak's (2013) work focused on physical activity, our analysis demonstrates that the hope and strengths were carried into other areas of life, not just the instigating event or area of membership (e.g., CF-S&H or family). This finding is consistent with Snyder and colleague's (1991) argument that hope is "consistent across situations and times" (p. 571). Each of the girls were able to use their hope and strengths in other areas of their lives, such as school, clubs, family, other sports, and dance. Importantly, they carried these beyond the identified hope-inducing relationships and memberships to areas where these relationships were not immediately present, such as at school where neither coaches, other CrossFit participants, nor mothers were directly overseeing their choices and actions. For both researchers and practitioners, this offers evidence that integrating girls into real-world environments (e.g., CF-S&H) is impactful beyond the setting. It also demonstrates that utilizing both the hope theory and strengths perspective brings a better understanding of how hope plays an integral part in realizing strengths within many settings.

CONCLUSION

Central to the PYD framework is the assertion that every individual possesses natural and inherent capabilities, and that intervention programs succeed by helping individuals to actualize these latent strengths and skills (Benson, 2003; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Shek et al., 2019; Tolan, 2014). The integration of at-risk youth in sport programs offers space for growth, opportunities for feeling a sense of belonging, and a place for decision making and adaptability. Successful outcomes are expected in interventions involving at-risk adolescent females; however, our findings suggest that incorporation into a CrossFit program designed to fit within a pre-existing program with a diverse community obtained the same outcomes without an interventional design.

Although interventions based on the strength perspective are not new to physical activity interventions, understanding and using the hope theory to examine at-risk adolescent females without a direct intervention is novel. Our findings add to the existing literature surrounding the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 1996), but also builds on the body of literature by combining the hope theory with the strength perspective. This research provides evidence that combining the strengths perspective with hope theory is useful, as we found that hope was an essential element that allowed the girls to realize their inherent strengths and to apply these strengths to other aspects of their lives.

This research is not without limitations. The interviews were intended to obtain the girls' perspective and dive deeper into their experiences of being integrated into a traditional CrossFit program. Although we only included 4 girl-mother pairs, the girls' interviews did not occur alone which may have limited their opportunity to share their experiences. Additionally, the relatively small number of participants represents a limitation. However, the researchers limited the participants to at-risk adolescent females and their mothers which necessarily resulted in a small sample. The consistent findings obtained from the study demonstrate reliability despite the small sample size, increasing our confidence that an inclusive environment offers benefits to at-risk youth. Moreover, utilizing the combined lens of the strengths perspective and hope theory proved valuable for highlighting the centrality of relationships and focusing on the role that hope plays in realizing the girls' inherent strengths.

This appears to be the first study that purposefully includes at-risk adolescents into inclusive programming to strengthen relationship development without an a priori interventional design. Findings from this research offer

support for expansion to a larger sample. The positive outcomes from at-risk adolescent girls using an inclusive CrossFit program provide a promising opportunity for future research which should focus on integrated sport-based interventions for at-risk groups with larger sample sizes to determine if the findings are generalizable across all populations.

NOTES

1 Each CrossFit affiliate has a distinctive name. CrossFit-Strength & Hope is a pseudonym.

2 A Place for Kids (APfK) is a pseudonym.

REFERENCES

- Ackerson, B. J., & Harrison, W. D. (2000). Practitioners' perceptions of empowerment. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 81(3) 238-244. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.1015>
- Bakshi, L. (2009). *Will CrossFit make American kids smarter?* CrossFit. <http://journal.crossfit.com/2009/01/will-crossfit-make-american-kids-smarter.tpl>
- Benson, P. L. (2003). Developmental assets and asset-building community: Conceptual and empirical foundations. In R. M. Lerner & P. L. Benson (Eds.), *Developmental assets and asset-building communities* (pp. 19-43). Springer.
- Biddle, S. J., Whitehead, S. H., O'Donovan, T. M., & Nevill, M. E. (2005). Correlates of participation in physical activity for adolescent girls: A systematic review of recent literature. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 2(4), 423-434. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2.4.423>
- Bruening, J. E., Clark, B. S., & Mudrick, M. (2015). Sport-based youth development in practice: The long-term impacts of an urban after-school program for girls. *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration*, 33(2), 87-103.
- Bruening, J. E., Dover, K. M., & Clark, B. S. (2009). Preadolescent female development through sport and physical activity: A case study of an urban after-school program. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 80(1), 87-101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2009.10599533>

- Chard, C. A., Nelson, D. S., Walters, K. A., Pollard, N., Pollard, N., Pollard, N., Gomez, K., Smith, D., Jenkins, N., Muwwakkil, S., Garland, C., Fard, A., & Fields, M. J. (2020). An inclusive approach to exploring perceptions of body image, self-esteem, and physical activity among black and African-American girls: Smart fit girls melanin magic. *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration*, 38(3), 133-151. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JPRA-2019-9710>
- Christens, B. D., & Peterson, N. A. (2012). The role of empowerment in youth development: A study of sociopolitical control as mediator of ecological systems' influence on developmental outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41(5), 623-635. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-011-9724-9>
- Collison, H., Darnell, S., Giulianotti, R., & Howe, P. D. (2017). The inclusion conundrum: A critical account of youth and gender issues within and beyond sport for development and peace interventions. *Social Inclusion*, 5(2), 223-231. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v5i2.888>
- Crockett, L. J., Raffaelli, M., & Shen, Y. L. (2006). Linking self-regulation and risk proneness to risky sexual behavior: Pathways through peer pressure and early substance use. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 16(4), 503-525. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2006.00505.x>
- Curran, T., & Wexler, L. (2017). School-based positive youth development: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of School Health*, 87(1), 71-80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12467>
- Damon, W. (2004). What is positive youth development? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 13-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203260092>
- Dattilo, J., Kleiber, D., & Williams, R. (1998). Self-determination and enjoyment enhancement: A psychologically-based service delivery model for therapeutic recreation. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 32, 258-271.
- Davies, M. J., Coleman, L., & Babkes Stellino, M. (2014, May 27-31). *Why CrossFit?: Participants' basic psychological needs and motives* [Paper presented]. North American Society for Sports Management (NASSM) Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, United States.
- Dawson, M. (2015). CrossFit: Fitness cult or reinventive institution? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(3), 361-379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690215591793>
- DeBate, R. D., & Thompson, S. H. (2005). Girls on the run: Improvements in self-esteem, body size satisfaction and eating attitudes/behaviors. *Eating and Weight Disorders-Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity*, 10(1), 25-32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03353416>
- DeMartini, A. & Belasik, W. (2020). CrossFit partner work: Strength building for SDP. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 8(15), 40-49.
- Eather, N., Morgan, P.J., & Lubans, D.R. (2016). Improving health-related fitness in adolescents: The CrossFit Teens™ randomised controlled trial. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 34(3), 209-223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2015.1045925>
- Farello, A., Blom, L., Mulvihill, T. & Erickson, J. (2019). Understanding female youth refugees' experiences in sport and physical education through the self-determination theory. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 7(13), 55-72.
- Garst, B. A., Bowers, E. P., & Stephens, L. E. (2020). A randomized study of CrossFit Kids for fostering fitness and academic outcomes in middle school students. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 83, Article 101856. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2020.101856>
- Gaylord-Harden, N. K., Barbarin, O., Tolan, P. H., & Murry, V. M. (2018). Understanding development of African American boys and young men: Moving from risks to positive youth development. *American Psychologist*, 73(6), 753-767. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000300>

- Gipson, C. M., Bennett, H., Malcom, N., & Trahan, A. (2021). Social innovation and fitness sports: A case of the CrossFit movement in North America. In A. Tjønndal (Ed.), *Social innovation in sport* (pp. 189-205). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63765-1_10
- Gipson, C. M., Hunt, T., & Moore, M. T. (2018). Lessons learned from a nontraditional sports program: CrossFit Kids for youth at risk. *National Youth-At-Risk Journal*, 3(1), 25-37. <https://doi.org/10.20429/nyarj.2018.030104>
- Glassman, G. (2007). Understanding CrossFit. *CrossFit Journal*, 56, 4.
- Heyne, L. A., & Anderson, L. S. (2012). Theories that support strengths-based practice in therapeutic recreation. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 46(2), 106-128.
- Huang, J. S., Norman, G. J., Zabinski, M. F., Calfas, K., & Patrick, K. (2007). Body image and self-esteem among adolescents undergoing an intervention targeting dietary and physical activity behaviors. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40(3), 245-251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.09.026>
- Jacobs, D. (2005). What's hope got to do with it? Toward a theory of hope and pedagogy. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 25(4), 783-802.
- Johnston, K. C., Marttinen, R., Frederick III, R. N., & Bhat, V. R. (2019). Girls' experiences in a positive youth development sport program: Developing a participant-centered space. *Journal of Youth Development*, 14(1), 93-111. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2019.729>
- Knapp, B. (2015). Rx'd and shirtless: An examination of gender in a CrossFit box. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 23(1), 42-53. <https://doi.org/10.1123/wspa.j.2014-0021>
- Kochanek, J., & Erickson, K. (2020). Interrogating positive youth development through sport using critical race theory. *Quest*, 72(2), 224-240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2019.1641728>
- Landry, J. B., & Solmon, M. A. (2004). African American women's self-determination across the stages of change for exercise. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 26(3), 457-469. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.26.3.457>
- MacDonald, D. J., Camiré, M., Erickson, K., & Santos, F. (2020). Positive youth development related athlete experiences and coach behaviors following a targeted coach education course. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 15(5-6), 621-630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1747954120942017>
- Martin, J., Chater, A., & Lorencatto, F. (2013). Effective behaviour change techniques in the prevention and management of childhood obesity. *International Journal of Obesity*, 31, 1287-1294. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2013.107>
- Maslic, V. (2019). CrossFit Sarajevo: Positioning against dominant ethnonational narratives. *Journal of Sport for Development*, 7(12), 59-77.
- Miller, K. E., Melnick, M. J., Barnes, G. M., Sabo, D., & Farrell, M. P. (2007). Athletic involvement and adolescent delinquency. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36, 711-723. [10.1007/s10964-006-9123-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-006-9123-9)
- Milot Travers, A. S., & Mahalik, J. R. (2019). Positive youth development as a protective factor for adolescents at risk for depression and alcohol use. *Applied Developmental Science*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2019.1634569>
- Nash, M. (2018). 'Let's work on your weaknesses': Australian CrossFit coaching, masculinity and neoliberal framings of 'health' and 'fitness. *Sport in Society*, 21(9), 1432-1453. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2017.1390565>
- Newland, A., Newton, M., Moore, E. W. G., & Legg, W. E. (2019). Transformational leadership and positive youth development in basketball. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 6(1), 30-41. <https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2018-0002>

- Paraschak, V. (2013). Hope and strength(s) through physical activity for Canada's aboriginal peoples. In C. J. Hallinan & B. Judd (Eds.), *Native games: Indigenous peoples and sports in the post-colonial world* (pp. 229-246). Emerald Group. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1476-2854\(2013\)0000007016](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1476-2854(2013)0000007016)
- Parker, A., Morgan, H., Farooq, S., Moreland, B., & Pitchford, A. (2019). Sporting intervention and social change: Football, marginalised youth and citizenship development. *Sport, Education and Society*, 24(3), 298-310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1353493>
- Petitpas, A. J., Cornelius, A. E., Van Raalte, J. L., & Jones, T. (2005). A framework for planning youth sport programs that foster psychosocial development. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19(1), 63-80. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.19.1.63>
- Pinderhughes, E. (1994). Empowerment as an intervention goal: Early ideas. In L. Gutierrez & P. Nurius (Eds.), *Education and research for empowerment practice* (pp. 17-31). University of Washington.
- Prinstein, M. J., Boergers, J., & Spirito, A. (2001). Adolescents' and their friends' health-risk behavior: Factors that alter or add to peer influence. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 26(5), 287-298. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpepsy/26.5.287>
- Redl, F., & Wineman, D. (1951). *Children who hate: The disorganization and breakdown of behavior controls*. Free Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications.
- Saleebey, D. (1996). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. *Social Work*, 41(3), 296-305. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/41.3.296>
- Schmalz, D. L., Deane, G. D., Birch, L. L., & Davison, K. K. (2007). A longitudinal assessment of the links between physical activity and self-esteem in early adolescent non-Hispanic females. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41(6), 559-565. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2007.07.001>
- Schrijnder, S., van Amsterdam, N., & McLachlan, F. (2020). 'These chicks go just as hard as us!' (Un)doing gender in a Dutch CrossFit gym. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 56(3), 382-398. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690220913524>
- Schulenkorf, N., Sherry, E., & Rowe, K. (2016). Sport for development: An integrated literature review. *Journal of Sport Management*, 30(1), 22-39. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2014-0263>
- Seal, E., & Sherry, E. (2018). Exploring empowerment and gender relations in a sport for development program in Papua New Guinea. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 35(3), 247-257. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2017-0166>
- Shek, D. T., & Chai, W. (2020). The impact of positive youth development attributes and life satisfaction on academic well-being: A longitudinal mediation study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, Article 2126. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02126>
- Shek, D. T., Dou, D., Zhu, X., & Chai, W. (2019). Positive youth development: Current perspectives. *Adolescent Health, Medicine and Therapeutics*, 10, 131-141. <https://doi.org/10.2147/AHMT.S179946>
- Sibley, B. A. (2012). Using sport education to implement a crossfit unit. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 83(8), 42-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2012.10598829>
- Simons-Morton, B., Haynie, D. L., Crump, A. D., Eitel, P., & Saylor, K. E. (2001). Peer and parent influences on smoking and drinking among early adolescents. *Health Education & Behavior*, 28(1), 95-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019810102800109>
- Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13(4), 249-275. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1304_01

- Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., Yoshinobu, L., Gibb, J., Langelle, C., & Harney, P. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*(4), 570-585. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.60.4.570>
- Snyder, C. R., Irving, L., & Anderson, J. R. (1991). Hope and health: Measuring the will and the ways. In C. R. Snyder & D. R. Forsyth (Eds.), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective* (pp. 285-305). Pergamon.
- Staiano, A. E., Abraham, A. A., & Calvert, S. L. (2013). Adolescent exergame play for weight loss and psychosocial improvement: A controlled physical activity intervention. *Obesity, 21*(3), 598-601. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.20282>
- Stubbs, B., & Rosenbaum, S. (2018). *Exercise-based interventions for mental illness: Physical activity as part of clinical treatment*. Academic Press.
- Sullivan, C. J. (2006). Early adolescent delinquency: Assessing the role of childhood problems, family environment, and peer pressure. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 4*(4), 291-313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204006292656>
- Sullivan, P. J., & Larson, R. W. (2010). Connecting youth to high-resource adults: Lessons from effective youth programs. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 25*(1), 99-123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558409350505>
- Tolan, P. (2014). Future directions for positive development intervention research. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 43*(4), 686-694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2014.936604>
- Walters, K., Chard, C., Jordan, K.A., & Anderson, D. (2020). Smart fit girls: A novel program for adolescent girls improves body image. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 38*(4), 109-122. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JPRA-2020-10373>
- Washington, M. S., & Economides, M. (2016). Strong is the new sexy: Women, CrossFit, and the postfeminist ideal. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 40*(2), 143-161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723515615181>
- Werch, C., Moore, M., DiClemente, C. C., Owen, D. M., Jobli, E., & Bledsoe, R. (2003). A sport-based intervention for preventing alcohol use and promoting physical activity among adolescents. *Journal of School Health, 73*(10), 380-388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2003.tb04181.x>
- Whipple, S. S., Frein, S. T., & Kline, K. A. (2020). The college orientation workshop as an experiential, positive youth development program. *Journal of Experiential Education, 43*(2), 185-204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825920908292>
- Zeldin, S., Camino, L., & Calvert, M. (2003). Toward an understanding of youth in community governance: Policy priorities and research directions. *Social Policy Report, 17*(3), 3-19.
- Zeldin, S., Christens, B. D., & Powers, J. L. (2013). The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnership: Bridging generations for youth development and community change. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 51*(3-4), 385-397. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-012-9558-y>